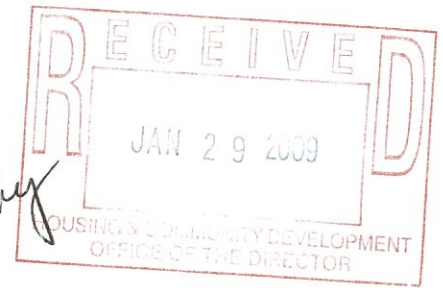




**CITY OF BLYTHE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

STAFF REPORT

Cathy



MEETING DATE: January 13, 2009

SUBJECT: General Plan Annual Report – Including 2008 Housing Element Report

PRESENTED BY: Jennifer Wellman, Planning Director

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Wellman, Planning Director

RECOMMENDATION: Receive and file

FISCAL IMPACT: None

BACKGROUND: Government Code Section 65400(b) requires that the planning agency of local governments provide an annual report to the legislative body on the status of the General Plan and progress in its implementation, including the progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs pursuant to Section 65584. Additionally, the annual report should include information concerning local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing pursuant to Section 65583 (c) (3). The annual report is required to be provided to the legislative body on or before July 1 of each year. The following information is provided in compliance with Government Code requirements.

STATUS OF GENERAL PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

General Plan Elements: On March 23, 2007, the Blythe City Council adopted a comprehensive update to its General Plan (1989 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Blythe). The updated General Plan will guide the long-term development of the City of Blythe, the existing Sphere of Influence and three new Planning Areas, through land use planning, policy implementation and establishment of development guidelines through 2025.

General Plan 2025 includes the following Elements:

- Community Design;
- Land Use;
- Circulation;
- Housing (Adopted 11/2004);
- Open Space and Conservation;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Safety;
- Noise; and,
- Colorado River Corridor (Area) Plan.

The Housing Element [which was adopted in November 2004 and valid through the planning period which ended January 1, 2006] was not updated with the balance of the General Plan. A comprehensive update of the Housing Element is currently underway, with completion scheduled for early 2009.

General Plan 2025 addresses citywide concerns about growth and conservation. Topics such as resource management, community design, affordable housing, safety, noise, and community services are included because they all have physical and environmental implications that are critical to the creation of a sustainable community.

The policies of General Plan 2025 reflect the following overall themes:

- Sustainable Development that Balances Growth and Conservation;
- Resource-Based Planning;
- Protection of Agricultural and Natural Resources;
- Setting Urban Growth Limits;
- Enhancement of Community Character and Identity;
- Neighborhood-Oriented Development;
- Economic Development; and,
- Fostering Development Patterns that Offer Alternatives to Automobile Use.

The General Plan includes an Area Plan for the Colorado River Corridor area. The Colorado River Corridor planning area is approximately 6,000 acres in size and contains approximately 12-miles of Colorado River-front lands within the City limits and existing Sphere of Influence.

The City included three new Planning Areas in General Plan 2025 that are relevant to the City's long term land use planning and policy efforts. One of the planning areas is located north of the existing City limits adjacent to the Colorado River. The second area is located south of the existing City boundary along the Colorado River, with the third planning area located north and west of the Blythe Municipal Golf Course. When General Plan 2025 was adopted in March of 2007, the three planning areas identified above were not within the City's Sphere of Influence. In October 2007, however, the Local Agency Formation Commission, through the Sphere of Influence Review process expanded the City's Sphere of Influence to include each of the three Planning Areas.

Adoption (updated): March 23, 2007

Amendments: Resolution 07-699 - General Plan 2025 Adoption

2008 Amendments: GPA 2007-02 – An amendment to the General Plan Land Use Map to allow development of a small mixed use community at the intersection(s) of Interstate 10, Highway 95 and East Hobsonway.

Pending Amendments: None

**City of Blythe
General Plan Housing Element
2008 Annual Report**

The **Housing Element** identifies and analyzes existing and projected housing needs and includes a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, financial resources and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. The housing element is required to identify adequate sites for housing, including rental housing, factory-built housing and mobile homes and also to make adequate provisions for the existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community.

Adoption (updated): November 23, 2004

HCD Compliance Date: June 6, 2003

Amendments: Resolution 04-928 - Housing Element Update

Pending Amendments: A comprehensive update of the Housing Element is currently underway; with completion scheduled in 2009.

Status of Regional Housing Needs Allocation

Based on HCD's determination of regional housing need, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) assigns the amount of increased housing that each local unit of government within its region is expected to provide. This construction need is referred to as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment number(s) or RHNA. Although SCAG, as the regional association of governments, assigns the RHNA numbers, the City of Blythe is also a member of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), the sub-regional association. CVAG and its member cities, which includes the City of Blythe, work cooperatively in meeting their housing needs. SCAG assigns the RHNA numbers for the sub-region that includes Blythe. The construction need for Blythe, therefore, fulfills a portion of the total construction need that has been assigned for the sub-region.

For the 2006-2014 RHNA assignment period the City of Blythe has been allocated 778 households-an increase of approximately 14% over the existing housing stock at the time of assignment. **Table 1** provides the housing need projections, classified by income level, for the City as identified by SCAG.

**Table 1
Blythe Household Need Projection by Income Group
2006-2014**

Total Units	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	Above Moderate Income
778	177	128	144	329

Table 2 provides the 2008 maximum Riverside County very low, low, moderate and above moderate household income limits as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Although household incomes vary considerably throughout Riverside County, the City is required to use countywide HUD income limits to evaluate housing affordability.

Table 2
2008 Riverside County Maximum Household Income Limits

Income Group	Household Size				
	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person
Very Low	\$23,300	\$26,650	\$29,950	\$33,300	\$35,950
Low	\$37,300	\$42,650	\$47,950	\$53,300	\$57,550
Moderate	\$43,400	\$49,600	\$55,800	\$62,000	\$67,000
Above Moderate	\$52,100	\$59,500	\$67,000	\$74,400	\$80,400

Source: State of California, Department of Housing and Community Development, Division of Housing Policy Development.

Table 3 provides the corresponding sales price ranges for housing units in each income group based upon 2008 income limits.

Table 3
Affordable Rent and Purchase Price by Income Category
Year 2008

Type	Annual Income ¹	Affordable Rent Payment ²	Estimated Affordable Purchase Price ³
Extremely Low	\$26,400	\$350 - \$660	Under \$50,000
Very Low	\$23,300 - \$43,950	\$582 - \$1,099	Under \$110,000
Low	\$37,300 - \$70,350	\$933 - \$1,759	Under \$230,000
Moderate	\$52,100 - \$98,200	\$1,303 - \$2,455	Under \$330,000
Above Moderate	Over \$98,200	Over \$2,455	Over \$330,000

¹ 2008 Income limits established by HUD. Based on MFI of \$62,000 for Riverside County.

² Based on 30% of income per month.

³ Assumes a 6.5% interest rate on a 30 year loan, does not include insurance or other fees.

Table 4 provides Blythe's household distribution by income group.

Table 4
Blythe's Household Distribution By Income Group

Income Group	2005-2007 Number	(%)
Less than \$10,000	546	11.6%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	438	9.3%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	857	18.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	402	8.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	723	15.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	751	15.9%
\$75,999 - \$99,999	502	10.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	407	8.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	31	0.7%
\$200,000 +	55	1.2%

Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey – Selected Economic Characteristics
http://factfinder.census.gov/staff/main.html?_lang=en

Table 5 shows the City's overall progress in meeting its share of the most recently projected regional housing needs. In 2008 the City added 13 new residential units, approximately 2% of the remaining identified need (637/13).

Table 5
**City's Progress in Achieving Its Share
Of Projected Regional Housing Needs**

Income Group Affordability	Housing Unit Allocation	Units Added				Remaining Need
		2008²	2007²	2006¹	Total for Planning Period	
Extremely Low	n/a	4	4	5	13	n/a ³
Very Low	177	6	9	27	42	122
Low	128	1	28	7	36	92
Moderate	144	2	10	9	21	123
Above Moderate	329	0	30	12	42	287
Total	778	13	81	60	141	624

¹ Distribution of housing units is based on building permit valuation increased by 30%.

² Distribution of housing units is based on building permit valuation increased by 35%.

³ Units have been subtracted from the very low remaining need.

Effectiveness in Meeting Goals and Objectives

Goal I – Overall Housing Production

Program 1 Water Infrastructure Capital Improvement

Assessment This program has resulted in the expansion of Blythe's water generating ability, increased Blythe's water storage capacity to two million gallons, and has lead to the successful installation of pipeline extensions for the Blue Ridge Road complex, as well as an eight-inch diameter water line extension that serves over 100 residences in the community of Balzburg. This program is ongoing and will assure that an adequate potable water supply is available to meet the growing demand, and to provide line extensions as needed.

Program 2 Sanitary Sewer Line Extensions

Assessment The extension of the sewer system to the Palo Verde Community College campus was completed in 1999-2000, and the golf course extension is expected to be completed in 2009. In addition, the City constructed a twelve inch force main that serves over 100 existing residences in the community of Balzburg, which was completed in 2007. This program successfully brought sewer services to Blythe residents, and will be modified to reflect planned line extensions during the 2006-2014 planning period.

Program 3 Zoning Changes

Assessment There were no changes made in regards to the number of unrelated persons living in the same house since it was determined that there are no limitations in the City's existing Municipal Code. Restrictions on group homes were evaluated and it was determined that neither the General Plan nor the Zoning Ordinance is restrictive in allowances and regulations for the siting of group homes.

General Plan 2025 provides for sufficient medium and high density residential land use designations to meet the projected housing needs of the community. Therefore, this program was accomplished and will be discontinued.

Program 4 Infill Land Use Inventory

Assessment The City compiled an inventory for the updated General Plan, which was adopted in March 2007. The inventory identified both vacant and developed lots that would be suitable for infill development. Therefore, this program has achieved its objective and will be discontinued.

Goal II – Housing Affordability

Program 6 Single Family Self Help Home Development Program Expansion

Assessment This program was unsuccessful since the City was unable to allocate funding for the construction of 15 self-help houses per year. The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC) was able to build 27 single family homes at Gateway and 14th and was able to build out Phase III of Briarbrook Homes which consisted of 34 self-help single family homes. Due to funding constraints, this program will be modified to a more appropriate target number for the construction of self-help housing.

Program 7 Rehabilitation of "Fixer-up Homes" by Low and Very Low Income Persons

Assessment Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment (DACE) has successfully administered grant funding on behalf of the City of Blythe. In 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007 the City of Blythe RDA contributed \$20,000 each year to DACE for USDA Housing Preservation Grant matching funds. In 2008, the RDA contributed \$40,000. This program was successful and will be continued.

Program 8 Assessment	Mobile Home Park Upgrade The Chief Building Inspector/Fire Marshall inspected all nine mobile home parks for compliance in 2005. The initial inspections by the Fire Marshall resulted in all nine parks being designated as non-compliant. Through a structured re-inspection and correction program conducted over the last three years, the Fire Marshall has been able to designate each of the nine parks as “in-substantial compliance”. Action was taken to upgrade the parks and bring them into compliance to assure safe living conditions for the residents. The City will continue to inspect mobile home parks every one to two years, and this program will continue in the 2006-2014 planning period.
Program 9 Assessment	Various Mortgage Assistance Programs The City of Blythe is participating with the Riverside County Economic Development Agency to enhance mortgage assistance programs within the community.
Program 10 Assessment	Encourage Energy Conservation The City of Blythe has enforced Title 24 requirements and will continue to work towards increasing energy efficiency within the home. This program is ongoing and will continue in the 2006-2014 planning period.
Program 11 Assessment	Senior Home Repair For the last several years the City has contributed matching funds to DACE for senior home repair programs. In 2003 and 2004, the City contributions of \$28,696 provided household repairs to 3 senior citizens. In 2006 a total of \$33,310 in grants from the City of Blythe and Housing Preservation Grant funds were contributed for repair and remodel of 4 senior citizens’ homes. In addition, the County of Riverside Assistance provided \$89,741 towards this program.
Program 12 Assessment	Home Improvement Program (HIP) and Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Blythe contributed funds to DACE in the amount of \$20,000 each year during 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007, thereby matching funding for DACE from the federal government. For 2008 the RDA contributed \$40,000 to DACE. This program is ongoing as funds permit, and will be extended to the current planning period.
Program 13 Assessment	Weatherization Program This program was not implemented since it was determined that the City had insufficient staff, and the program did not produce the desired results. This program will be discontinued.
Program 14 Assessment	Code Enforcement of Substandard Rental Units For the 1998-2005 planning period, a number of complaints were filed for the following subsidized housing projects: Broadway Manor, Sunset West, Squaw Valley, Quail Place, and Villa Monterey. All of the complaints were subsequently resolved. Between 2006 and 2008, Highlands Property Development purchased three apartment projects within the City of Blythe. Remodeling of the Sunrise and Sunset West Apartments was completed in late 2006 and early 2007, respectively. The third complex, Rio Colorado, is currently undergoing renovation with an expected completion date in early 2009.
Program 15 Assessment	Monitoring of Subsidized Housing Units This program was unsuccessful since funding sources could not be retained and there was no enforcement agency. This program will be discontinued.

Program 16 **Promoting Infrastructure Improvements in Established Urban Neighborhoods**
Assessment This program was successful in that an inventory of unpaved streets and other infrastructure constraints were identified. Therefore, this program accomplished its objective and will not be continued.

Program 17 **Screening of Public Owned Industrial Properties Adjacent to low/mod income residential areas**
Assessment This program was unsuccessful because the City had insufficient staff to effectively implement it. Since staffing levels remain unchanged, the program will be discontinued.

Goal III – Increase Senior Specialized Housing/Service Needs

Program 18 **Additional Senior Multi-Family Housing**
Assessment The City of Blythe has approved two Tentative Tract Maps in order to provide additional senior housing within the City. A Tentative Tract Map for an 81 unit senior restricted complex, Agate Senior Housing, was approved, but is currently listed as inactive by the City. The second Tract Map, Cottonwood Meadows, includes 103 small individual homes and an associated 24 bed assisted living facility. This project is not income restricted and although the Tract Map has been approved, as of 2008 the project had not been built. The objective of this program will be fulfilled once the projects are developed. Therefore, this program will not be continued.

Program 19 **Increase the Skilled Nursing Facility Capacity**
Assessment This program was unable to meet its objective due to insufficient staffing and lack of funding, and it will be discontinued.

Program 20 **Related Transportation Services**
Assessment Although the City's public transportation provider, Desert Roadrunner, provides fixed bus route services, they were unable to maintain the veterans/seniors transport program due to lack of funding and little demand. Desert Roadrunner does however maintain the dial-a-ride services for the community and participates in the Desert RoadTRIP (Desert Road Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project) which reimburses non-family members for transportation costs associated with transporting senior citizens out of the Valley to medical appointments. The City continues to coordinate with Desert Roadrunner, and will encourage services which meet the needs of the community.

Goal IV – Farmworker Housing

Program 21 **Increase Home Ownership Among Farmworkers**
Assessment The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition constructed the Briarbrook project in 2002, which consists of 34 single family homes on 8 acres. The project consisted of Sweat Equity participation for homeowners, although farmworkers were not specifically targeted.

Program 22 **Migrant Worker Housing Code Enforcement**
Assessment As mentioned above, several code complaints were addressed and resolved during the previous planning period. The City will continue to respond to code compliance complaints and work towards achieving code compliance for affordable housing projects and residences. This program will be modified to address code compliance for all residents.

Goal V – Homeless Continuum of Care Programs

Program 23 Re-establish a Homeless Emergency Care Facility

Assessment Although the Richard Allen Foundation is no longer operational, the City of Blythe is currently working to locate an appropriately sized and zoned site for the construction of an all inclusive homeless services facility. At completion the facility will provide shower, laundry, and food services to homeless persons in addition to housing and shelter. This program needs a funding source and will be modified accordingly.

Program 24 Establish Transitional and Permanent Housing

Assessment As mentioned above, the City of Blythe intends to facilitate acquisition of a suitable site for construction of a homeless shelter and service facility. This program will be modified to address the need of a homeless/transitional service facility and the need to identify an appropriate party to manage such a facility.

Program 25 Case Worker Manager

Assessment This program was unsuccessful due to staffing constraints. The City will work toward developing a transitional housing/homeless service facility, but this program will be discontinued.

Program 26 Expanded Emergency Rental Assistance

Assessment This program was unsuccessful since funding sources could not be secured. It will be discontinued.

Goal VI – Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Programs

Program 27 Expanded Rehabilitation Services for Men and Women

Assessment Since 2006, the City has contributed \$17,000 in CDBG funds to Hopeful Start for parking lot improvements, meeting supplies, and upgrades to the facility. Although a meeting place for teens and adults with alcohol and drug dependency issues has been established, the City has not established a recovery center or transitional housing specifically for women, due primarily to funding constraints. This program will be modified to encourage the development of such a center.

Goal VII – Fair Housing

Program 28 Undertake Study of Potential Disabilities Constraints

Assessment This program was unsuccessful due to staffing constraints. The City enforces the Americans with Disabilities Act in all projects, and homes built in the City must comply with these requirements. Further, senior projects in the City focus on assisting the disabled and aging, and provide improvements to the homes as needed.

Program 29 Support of Anti-Discrimination Programs

Assessment A Fair Housing Committee was not established, nor were brochures created. This program was unsuccessful due to staffing and funding constraints. The City refers discrimination complaints to the County EDA, which maintains the area's clearinghouse for such complaints. Data and information on the EDA's programs is maintained at City Hall, and distributed to residents on request. The program will be modified to address the current practice.

Goal VIII – Public Input and Program Implementation

Program 30 Homeless Continuum of Care

Assessment The City of Blythe was actively involved in Riverside County's Homeless Continuum of Care meetings, workshops, and housing summits. In 2005 and 2006 the City participated in the homeless census and will continue to be active in working towards fulfilling the regional goal to end homelessness.

Program 31 Housing Summit

Assessment A Housing Summit was organized and attended by the City for two years, but was not continued due to lack of attendance by invited participants. This program will be discontinued.

Program 33 Process for Planning Uses of Blythe RDA Low/Mod Income Funds

Assessment Since 2006 LMIHF (Low and Moderate Income Housing Funds) have been used to facilitate the construction of water and sewer services, establish low and moderate income apartments, and were contributed to DACE Housing Preservation Grants. This program was successful.

Program 34 Monitoring and Incremental Corrections Re-evaluation

Assessment The Planning Department prepares an annual Housing Element report for the Mayor and the City Council that addressed the status of the implementation process for the programs set forth in the Housing Element.

***Local Efforts to Remove Governmental Constraints
to the Maintenance, Improvement, and Development of Housing***

Steps that the City has taken to remove governmental constraints that hinder the development of affordable housing include the following:

1. Continued implementation of the City's General Plan, including the Housing Element.
2. Continued processing of Development Plans which include an affordable housing component as a portion of the project Development Agreements.
3. Zoning Ordinance revisions, which encourage and allow the City Council more flexibility in approving reductions in standards for Affordable Housing projects.
4. Compliance with the affordable housing provisions of the Community Redevelopment Law.
5. Allocation of CDBG funds for housing services and street improvements in lower income neighborhoods to encourage rehabilitation and revitalization.

cc: City Manager
 Coachella Valley Association of Governments
 County of Riverside Planning Division
 State Department of Housing and Community Development
 Governor's Office of Planning and Research